

# Amba Sutta

## The Simile of Mangos

(AN.Catukka Nipāta)

The Buddha explains his message for the comprehension of people. Also, the Buddha explains the nature of the world and people. The Buddha's attempt was to point out suffering and cessation of suffering for the liberation of beings. Sometimes the Buddha describes people giving examples from the environment. Here, in the discourse of Amba (mangos), the Buddha explains the qualities of people comparing four types of mangos.

According to the discourse, there are four types of mangos. They are;

“*Cattārimāni, bhikkhave, ambāni. Katamāni cattāri?*”

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>Āmaṃ pakkavaṇṇaṃ</i>   | (Unripe, looking ripe)   |
| 2. <i>Pakkaṃ āmavaṇṇaṃ</i>   | (Ripe, looking unripe)   |
| 3. <i>Āmaṃ āmavaṇṇaṃ,</i>    | (Unripe, looking unripe) |
| 4. <i>Pakkaṃ pakkavaṇṇaṃ</i> | (Ripe, looking ripe)     |

Comparing these four kinds of mangos the Buddha describes the inner qualities and behavior of beings.

### 1. *Āmaṃ pakkavaṇṇaṃ* (Unripe, looking ripe)

There is a certain person, who delights in approaching, receding, looking on, scrutinizing, bending, stretching forth, but does not know the four noble truths, the suffering, the course of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path that leads to getting rid of suffering. This is the unripe person looking ripe. The Buddha compares this first person to the unripe mango that looks ripe.

### 2. *Pakkaṃ āmavaṇṇaṃ* (Ripe, looking unripe)

The second person, who does not delight in approaching, receding, looking on, scrutinizing, bending, stretching forth and bearing the three robes and bowl, but knows the four noble truths as it really is. He knows the suffering and its cessation very well. The Buddha says, this is the ripe person looking unripe. The Buddha compares this second person to the ripe mango that looks unripe.

### 3. *Āmaṃ āmavaṇṇaṃ,* (Unripe, looking unripe)

The third person, who does not delight in approaching, receding, looking on, scrutinizing, bending, stretching forth, also does not know the four noble truths as it really is. The Buddha compares this third person to the unripe mango that looks unripe.

### 4. *Pakkaṃ pakkavaṇṇaṃ* (Ripe, looking ripe)

The fourth person, who delights in approaching, receding, looking on, scrutinizing, bending, stretching forth also knows the world reality, the four noble truths as it really is. The Buddha compares this fourth person to the ripe mango that looks ripe.

In this Amba sutta, the Buddha explains people's inner spiritual qualities and external appearance. Here, the Buddha, especially, emphasizes the spiritual qualities than external appearance. The value of a person depends on how far he or she has developed knowledge, intelligence and wisdom which helps to get rid of suffering. Even though a person shines in the society, if he has no clear comprehension of the arising and cessation of suffering, he is not praised in Buddhism. Even though someone doesn't shine, if he has clear understanding about arising and ceasing of suffering, he is highly appreciated in Buddhism.

The main purpose of Buddhism is to point out the cause of suffering and the cessation of suffering. Buddha explains that the Buddha and his sublime truth shine in the world because of three reasons those are decay, death and rebirth. Those are main challenges in our lives. The Buddha discovered, analyzed and proclaimed the path that leads to getting rid of above challenges for the liberation of beings. If someone understands the suffering, he realizes the origin of suffering. If someone realizes the origin of suffering, he comprehends the cessation of suffering. If someone understands the cessation of suffering, he goes forward on the path that leads to getting rid of suffering according to his effort, dedication, wisdom and capacity that he practiced spiritual faculties in his previous lives. When one step of four noble truths is realized by a wise person, other steps are also understood.

The fourfold noble truth (*Cattāriariyasaccāni*) that we discussed before is based on understanding of dependent origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*). Understanding the dependent origination is like understanding the heart of Buddhism. That is why Buddhism says he who sees the dependent origination sees the Dhamma (*Yo paticcasamuppadaṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati*). Also, he who sees the Dhamma sees the dependent origination (*Yo dhammaṃ passati so paticcasamuppadaṃ passati*). Further, he who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha. And, he who sees the Buddha sees the Dhamma. Understanding the dependent origination leads to understand the Dhamma and the Buddha. In this situation, understanding the dependent origination plays a main role on the path of liberation. For that, associating good friends who explain the Buddha's message correctly, listening to the Dhamma and wise reflection are very important.

The nearest reason of suffering is clinging or greed, but the ultimate root of suffering is ignorance. On the other hand, understanding the four noble truths depends on understanding ignorance. In short the meaning of ignorance is lack of understanding of cause and effect of suffering. When we experience something through our senses like the eye, ear, that experience doesn't come to the present from the past. Also, that experience doesn't go to future from the present. This is the ultimate truth which happens in the world whether we like it or not. Unfortunately, because of lack of this comprehension people think that before we experience something, it happened. And also, the world thinks that after we experienced, the experience remains. This is the way that the world thinks. This is the ignorance that we have to overcome as much as we are knowledgeable about what the Buddha explained.

In the early morning of the Vesak Full moon day, the Buddha got enlightened in Bodh Gaya. He realized and reflected on cause and effect of suffering that the world suffers with decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. At that moment, he realized and discovered the reasons of suffering one by one orderly. There, he understood the closest reason of decay (*Jarā*), death (*Marana*), sorrow

(*Soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*Dukkha*), grief (*Domanassa*) and despair (*Upāyasa*) as birth (*Jāti*). Then he analyzed why birth happens. Here he saw the reason of birth as the process of becoming (or existence=*Bhava*). The Buddha again investigated the reason of the process of becoming. He understood the reason of becoming as clinging (*Upadana*). Next he considered the reason of clinging as craving (*Tanhā*). After that he realized the reason of craving as sensation (or feeling=*Vedanā*). When he reflects on the cause of feeling, he understood the reason for feeling as contact (or impression = *Phassa*). Then he recognized six senses as the cause of contact. Again, while he was investigating the reason for the six senses, he realized mind and matter (Mentality and corporeality = *Nāma Rupa*). When he analyzed the cause of mind and matter, he understood consciousness (*Viññāna*). After that, he examined the reason for consciousness as volitional actions (*Sankhāra*). Finally he clearly realized that volitional actions arise because of ignorance (*Avijjā*). When we are ignorant of volitional actions other causes of suffering arise like decay, death etc. According to this discovery, the Buddha understood the process of our entire life in the Sansāric Journey. Here we can classify all of them in an order like this;

Through **ignorance** are conditioned **volitional actions** or kamma-formations

(*Avijjā paccayā sankhārā*).

Through **volitional actions** is conditioned **consciousness**

(*Sankhāra paccayā viññānam*).

Through **consciousness** are conditioned **mental and physical phenomena**

(*Viññāya paccayā nāmarupam*).

Through **mental and physical phenomena** are conditioned **the six faculties**

(i.e., five physical sense-organs and mind) (*Nāmarupa paccayā salāyatanam*)

Through **the six faculties** is conditioned (sensorial and mental) **contact**.

(*Salāyatana paccayā phasso*)

Through (sensorial and mental) **contact** is conditioned **sensation**.

(*Phassa paccayā vedanā*)

Through **sensation** is conditioned **craving**.

(*Vedanā paccayā tanhā*)

Through **craving** ('thirst') is conditioned **clinging**.

(*Tanhā paccayā upādānam*)

Through **clinging** is conditioned **the process of becoming**.

(*Upādana paccayā bhavo*)

Through **the process of becoming** is conditioned **birth**.

(*Bhava paccayā jāti*)

Through **birth** are conditioned **decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair**

(*Jāti paccayā jarā marana soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsā*)

This discovery can be seen only in a dispensation of a Buddha. It can't be seen in any other religion or philosophy. Buddhism has explained this process using several terms like;

<i>Ariya Ñāya</i>	– The theory of the Buddha
<i>Paticcasamuppāda</i>	– The dependent origination
<i>Hetuphala Dhamma</i>	– The law of cause and effect
<i>Idappaccayatā</i>	– The process of cause and effect

The main difference of Buddhism, when other religions and philosophies are compared, is the theory of cause and effect. All other religions, philosophies and sciences explain their teachings and theories depending on **conventional truth**. According to the conventional truth, before we experience there was a world and also after our experience the world remains. According to the dependent origination in Buddhism where the **ultimate truth** is explained, before we experience there was no world and also after our experience the world doesn't remain. The experience or the world arises and ceases as the result of whether the conditions are together or separated.

When our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact with external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, mental formations, the experience arises at the moment. Simultaneously, five aggregates arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. Five aggregates are: matter (*Rupa* - රූප), feelings (*Vedanā* - වේදනා), perception (*Saññā* - සංකේතය), mental formations (*Sankhāra* - සංඛාර) and consciousness (*Viññāna* - විඤ්ඤාණ). Five aggregates are always together. They can't be separated. They could be realized by wisdom. These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is that they weren't here before the experience. And also, they won't remain after the experience. Understanding of the dependent origination directly focuses on comprehension of five aggregates. The Buddha advises everyone who are in every spiritual level to reflect on five aggregates as arising, ceasing, enjoyment, danger and liberation. Every moment five aggregate arise when conditions are together. Also, they immediately cease when conditions separate. There is an enjoyment in these five things, but enjoyment is less, danger is a lot. That is why the wise person should find liberation from five aggregates. **The Buddha says the highest education that a wise person should gain is the comprehension of five aggregates. And the great victory is defeating ignorance and attachment. Also, the highest practice is concentration and insight meditation. And the noble achievement is comprehension and liberation.**

As a result of the union of the five aggregates, we experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence in Buddhism is the intelligence that "**Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence**" (*Ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati* - අනුත්වා සම්භූතං නුත්වා න භවිස්සති). If we can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering. The Buddha has explained this theory in various ways in his teachings like this;

When this is, that is (*Asmin sati idam hoti*)  
 This arising, that arises (*Imassa Uppādā idam uppajjati*)  
 When this is not, that is not (*Asmin asati idam na hoti*)  
 This ceasing, that ceases (*Imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati*)

Understanding of Buddhism depends on how far we have understood this theory, the dependent origination. If someone has clear knowledge, he is knowledgeable about suffering. Understanding of suffering causes us to understand the four noble truths. If someone knows suffering as lack of knowledge of this theory, listening to what the Buddha taught he tries to understand the dependent origination, five

aggregates and four noble truths as much as he can. And also he always tries to practice the path to get rid of suffering. Here he has to practice three disciplines. They are;

1. Virtue (Seela)
2. Tranquility (Samādhi)
3. Wisdom (Paññā)

First of all, he disciplines his physical and verbal actions with the knowledge of the dependent origination. Having a good discipline in speech and behavior, he gradually trains his mind in tranquility by practicing concentration meditation. Because of his clear knowledge about the process how suffering arises with concentrated mind, he reflects on impermanence. Here he always reflects on arising and ceasing of the five aggregates. As much as he can examine, his ignorance gradually decreases. Simultaneously, arising of other parts of dependent origination of his life also decreases. As the result of practicing this path, suffering gradually decreases. He always tries to live with virtue and concentration, seeing insight as impermanence. Also, he is aware of the present moment. This is the way how ignorance ceases and other phenomena with ignorance gradually decrease;

With the fading away and cessation of **ignorance** comes cessation of **volitional formations**  
(*Avijjāyatveva asesaviraga nirodhā samkhāra nirodho*)

With the cessation of **volitional formations** comes cessation of **consciousness**  
(*Samkhāra nirodha viññāna nirodho*)

With the cessation of **consciousness** comes cessation of **mentality and corporeality**  
(*Viññāna nirodha nāmarupa nirodho*)

With the cessation of **mind and matter** comes cessation of **six senses**  
(*Nāmrupa nirodha salāyatana nirodho*)

With the cessation of **six senses** comes cessation of **contact**  
(*Salāyatana Nirodha phassa nirodho*)

With the cessation of **contact** comes cessation of **feeling**  
(*Phassa nirodha vedanā nirodho*)

With the cessation of **feeling** comes cessation of **craving**  
(*Vedanā nirodha tanhā nirodho*)

With the cessation of **craving** comes cessation of **clinging**  
(*Tanhā nirodha upādāna nirodho*)

With the cessation of **clinging** comes cessation of existence of **becoming**  
(*Upādāna nirodha bhava nirodho*)

With the cessation of existence **becomes** cessation of **birth**  
(*Bhava nirodhā jāti nirodho*)

With the cessation of **birth**, cessation of **decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair comes** (*Jāti nirodhā jārā marana soka parideva dukka domanassa upāyasā*)

This is the way that the Buddha pointed out how to get rid of suffering and achieve the final bliss of liberation. For this result, we should dedicate all our things like time, wealth, effort now when the Buddha's dispensation has appeared in the world. Actually, we were born in this world in this time to

attain liberation. Therefore, we have to practice as much as we can. Practicing the deliverance path (*Mokkha Magga*) is the most beneficial thing that we can do throughout our life as intelligent people.

As the result of practicing the above path we comprehend all mental and physical things according to three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). They are:

- |                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| i. Impermanence                 | ( <i>Anicca</i> - අනිත්‍ය) |
| ii. Unsatisfactoriness          | ( <i>Dukkha</i> - දුක්ඛ)   |
| iii. Selflessness = Egolessness | ( <i>Anatta</i> - අනාත්ම)  |

We see these three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ) through all our experience by practicing mindfulness and wisdom. They have become life experience. We don't struggle with them. And they are like our close friends. Then we have overcome all kinds of sufferings, unsatisfactoriness and lamentations. We achieve the real liberation from everything.

Comprehension of three characteristics is the real refuge that we can make ourselves. Also, that is the way how we can make a refuge with the Dhamma. Then we don't accept any other refuge from outside. We are completely independent. Whether we delight or not in external things, spiritually we delight and are away from suffering. Spiritually, we have lit a bright lamp which reduces darkness of ignorance.

Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge (*Attadipa Bhikkhave viharata attasarana na annasarana*). Dwell with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge (*Dhammadipa Bhikkhave viharata Dhammasarana na annasarana*).

(Attadeepa Sutta)



**May The Triple Gem Bless You!**

තෙරුවන් සරණයි !

**May All Beings Be Well, Happy & Peaceful!**

වෙත්වා සවිසත හැම කල් නිදුකී !

(Tuesday Dhamma discussion at Los Angeles Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena. 04/11/2017)